

Review: 'Gremlins' plot misses its mark



In "Gremlins," Billy Peltzer, played by Zach Galligan, opens a most unusual birthday present as his parents, played by Frances Lee McCain and Hoyt Axton, look on.

By SHAWN BEHLEN
Staff Reviewer

"Gremlins" is simply an exercise in schizophrenia. This film bounces from riotous humor to morbid violence and back with nary an eyebrow raised.

The questions I have for the makers of this film are: What gives? Is this a satire on the good and evil sides of mankind or is it a spoof of nostalgic goody-goody films circa 1940? Is it a lesson on the intrinsic values of western culture or is it just the black humor of a satanic comedy writer on speed? Or, (and here's the big one) am I just a fool who should take the movie as it comes and ignore all the artsy-fartsy messages on life that it contains?

I'm really not sure about the answers to any of those questions but I suspect the answer to the last question is a resounding yes.

"Gremlins" was directed by Joe Dante ("The Howling") and produced by Steven Spielberg. That right there gives some clues to the nature of this film. Put Mr. Horror with Mr. Adventure-and-a-kid and you're bound to have some conflicts. Advance word on this film was that Spielberg wanted the little monsters to be cute and nice and Dante wanted them to be ugly and nasty. It was reported that they compromised. The film, however, looks like they simply took turns in shooting the material and then edited it all together.

Example number one: a movie marquee in the film advertises "A Boy's Life" and "Look at the Stars". These were Spielberg's working titles for "E.T." and "Close Encounters." Cute, huh?

Example number two: in one scene, "It's a Wonderful Life" with Jimmy Stewart is on the television. The first shot of the wintry town "Gremlins" is set in a duplicate of the many shots of Stewart's town in "Wonderful Life." I can only assume that parallels should then be drawn.

Example number three: Polly Holliday (Flo on "Alice") portrays a mean, bitter and elderly widow who threatens the young hero and his dog in a way so reminiscent of the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz" that it really is hard to ignore. Does this mean all of this can be considered a bad dream in which the hero and heroine learn lessons about mankind?

Example number four: well, you probably get the idea — I could go on for quite a while.

In case you're wondering by now, "Gremlins" is about citizens of a small town who are terrorized by the ugly little creatures because the hero doesn't follow orders.

Overall, the film is not a total loss. I do have to recommend it for the moments of inspired lunacy, if for nothing else. In no other film I know of can you see ugly little villains murder a family and then go into a bar, flash a waitress and breakdance.

I do wish, however, that Dante and Spielberg had decided exactly what they wanted — whether it be black comedy, social satire or horror film and stuck with it. "Gremlins" tries to walk too fine a line and just can't make it.

The Boss is back with so-so album

By KARL PALLMEYER
Reviewer

"Born in the U.S.A."
Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band
***½

The "Boss" is back with a good, but not great, album.

It's been two years since Springsteen's solo album, "Nebraska," and four years since his last album with the E Street Band, "The River," so the music world has been looking forward to his new album. "Born in the U.S.A." is a disappointment, but only a minor one.

If "Born in the U.S.A." had been released by any other artist it would have been brilliant, but Springsteen is not any other artist. The album has several good songs, but it doesn't stand up as a whole.

The most obvious problem with the album is its cover: a too-large picture of Springsteen's blue jean-clad rear. The Rolling Stones had a similar picture on their "Sticky Fingers" album (except it was a frontal

view with a working zipper) and it seemed to suit the band's "bad boy" image. When Loverboy had a picture of a leather-clad rear on their "Get Lucky" album it seemed a cheap attempt to gain the attention of pre-pubescent girls. Springsteen's image is not suited to this type of artwork.

As for the music, there are some very good songs on this album. "Downbound Train," "I'm On Fire," "No Surrender," "My Hometown" and the title track are really very good.

Springsteen is using more synthesizer than in his earlier work and, unlike most bands today, he uses the synthesizer to compliment, rather than dominate, the song.

Roy Bittan's keyboard work on "Downbound Train," "I'm On Fire" and "My Hometown" is extremely haunting.

"No Surrender," a hard-rocking song in typical Springsteen style about the loss of youthful idealism among a group of musicians, is probably the album's best track. Unfortunately several of the songs sound too much like Springsteen's older material. "Darlington County"



sounds similar to Springsteen's earlier "Cadillac Ranch" and "Working on the Highway" is a typical "good ole boy" song that sounds much like Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues." "Bobby Jean," "I'm Goin' Down," "Glory Days" and "Dancing in the Dark" are also good but typical.

The only bad song on the album is "Cover Me." The lyrics are very personal and show the insecurity of a man who has to pretend to be a "tough guy," but the music is too harsh and up-beat and leaves the song sounding impersonal.

"Born in the U.S.A." is a good, but not great, album. Some songs are good, but others are too typically Springsteen. However "Born in the U.S.A." is good solid rock and a welcome change from most of the electric pop on the radio today.

Short takes: Sting to be villain again

United Press International

Sting and Beals star together
HOLLYWOOD — Jennifer Beals, the Yale student who exploded to stardom in "Flashdance" last year, has been signed for the title role in Columbia Pictures' "The Bride," a new version of the classic Mary Shelley novel.

The 20-year-old newcomer will co-star with Sting, lead singer of the rock group "Police," who will play Baron von Frankenstein. Geraldine Page heads the list of supporting players.

"The Bride" will be directed by Franc Roddam on locations in Europe. Miss Beals currently is filming "Cinderella" with Matthew Broderick for Shelly Duvall's "Fairie Tale Theater" for cable TV.

'Hee Haw' renewed for 16th year
HOLLYWOOD — "Hee Haw," the hayseed series, has been renewed for a 16th season in syndicated TV with a contract for 26 all-new episodes starring Buck Owens and Roy Clark.

The Nashville-based country music and comedy show, which is tele-

vised from Opryland Studios, will add new features for the coming season, including Marianne Gordon (Mrs. Kenny Rogers) and Gailard Sartain and George "Goobar" Lindsey in regular sketches titled "Goobar and Gailard Go to Town."

Such old favorites as Minnie Pearl and Grandpa Jones will return along with Don Harron and guest stars John Schneider, Dub Taylor, Hoyt Axton, Loretta Lynn, Irene Mandrell and Marie Osmond.

'Dr. Doolittle' series to air
HOLLYWOOD — Twentieth Century-Fox, which produced "Dr. Doolittle" starring Rex Harrison in 1967, has developed an animated TV series based on the classic Hugh Lofting stories.

The studio announced it has completed 13 of a planned 52 episodes of "The Voyages of Dr. Doolittle" for syndication.

Robert B. Morin, a studio vice president, said, "This is whimsical family entertainment with the advantage of each episode being able to air alone or grouped as a complete series."

Movies under the night sky

By LESLIE HEFFNER
Reporter

Many Aggies enjoy watching movies under the stars at the Grove — a summer pastime made possible by the work of a handful of fellow students.

These fellow students are employees of The Grove, and most of them are members of Aggie Cinema.

"I make sure things go along the right lines, but the students make all decisions and handle the finances," says Paul Strifolino, sponsor of The Grove and Aggie Cinema.

The Grove student workers are usually hired from the Aggie Cinema committee, because they have the know-how and experience in movie operations, Strifolino said. The students do everything from maintaining The Grove to running the projection machine.

Working at The Grove takes a lot of time, but the experience, practical skills and interpersonal skills which are learned through the job are invaluable, said Susan Slowey, public relations and concessions student worker.

The Grove pays its own way. Like the Aggie Cinema it receives no student service fees. Its only income is from admission fees. The Grove manager and assistant manager select the movies.

"We sit down and take a look at what movies have been shown on the campus and what the response was, then we go from there," said Mark Garner, manager of The Grove and chairman of Aggie Cinema.

This summer's film series opened June 4 with "Gone With the Wind." Last Sunday almost 200 people showed up to see "Tron."

When the summer is over Aggie Cinema takes up where The Grove leaves off. The last movie of The Grove season will be "A Boy and His Dog" on Aug. 16.

Aggie Cinema shows its movies in Rudder Theater. "The Big Chill," "Moscow on the Hudson," "Splash" and "Footloose" are a few of the movies scheduled for next year.

1984

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<p>All Movies begin at 8:45. Gate opens 8:00</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Grove</i></p> <p>Harrison Ford in BLADE RUNNER Thursday June 14</p>	<p>A&M Stu \$.75 Non-stu \$ 1.50 Child (7-12) \$ 1</p> <p>DAN AYKROYD EDDIE MURPHY They're not just getting rich... They're getting even.</p> <p>TRADING PLACES Some very funny business.</p> <p>Friday & Saturday June 15 & 16</p>	<p>Ralph Bakshi's animated futuristic film Wizards Sunday June 17</p>
<p>Orson Welles in CITIZEN KANE Monday June 18</p>	<p>TRUE GRIT Starring John Wayne Tuesday June 19</p>	<p>PRIVATE BENJAMIN with Goldie Hawn Wednesday June 20</p>

The Grove

Due to the release of **Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom**, **Raiders of the Lost Ark** has been pulled from theatrical release.

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